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By

HENRY F. COLBY, D.D.

FIVE GREAT REASONS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS

By HENRY F. COLBY, D.D.

"I do not believe in Foreign Missions. They are too far away. There is too much to be done at home."

WAIT A LITTLE, MY FRIEND! ARE YOU SURE YOU ARE NOT HASTY IN THAT CONCLUSION? HERE ARE FIVE GREAT REASONS WHY YOU AS A CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO BE INTERESTED IN FOREIGN MISSIONS. KINDLY READ THEM AND GIVE THEM A FEW MOMENTS' THOUGHT

FIRST OF ALL

The Lord Jesus Christ's own positive command. Read it in Matthew 28, 19, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." After his resurrection and before his ascension this was the duty he would solemnly impress upon his followers. With it he linked the precious promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Was the order meant for those first disciples only? Did he expect that they could so complete the work that subsequent generations would have none of it to do? If this is not binding on us, are any of his commands? Can we find a single excuse for disobeying it which could not have been found by the apostles? What right have we to appropriate the promise and not the command? And how can we say that we are fulfilling it by simply trying to bring to Christ some one who is near us? It evidently implies a world-wide horizon for our thoughts, our sympathies, our prayers and our giving. The Duke of Wellington, it is said, once replied to a professing Christian who expressed doubt as to the expediency of missions: "Look to your marching orders!" So we start with this. How can we get away from it? The Lord's own positive command!

SECOND

The very nature of the gospel. The greatest missionary text is "God so loved the world." Note the scope of that word! Jesus Christ came to express a compassion and offer a salvation limited to no one people. The necessity he came to supply is as wide as the realm of sin and sorrow. If he is the Saviour that you and I need he is the Saviour for all men everywhere. The distinction between "home" and "foreign" melts away under the light that beams from the Cross. As well ask the rays that pour down from the sun to confine their light and heat to limited areas of the earth's surface as to try to restrain the love of Christ within local prejudices and preferences. The gospel from its very nature must flow over the earth, even if Christ had formulated no Great Commission.

THIRD

Our own personal obligations to foreign missions. Christianity did not originate here any more than in India, China or Japan. It was brought here. Are not we as far away from its first field in Palestine as are the heathen countries just mentioned? The first movements of Christian advance were

determined by the fact that all roads lead to Rome. If the world's metropolis had then been to the East and not to the West evangelization would have moved eastward and not westward. Then if India had received the gospel thus before us would it not have been India's duty to send it to England and America? We have it because the first disciples and many subsequent generations of believers obeyed Christ's command. Shall we be slack in passing it on? Shall we say, "It has now reached its final goal and can rest, because, forsooth, it has come to us?" That would be selfishness indeed. "Freely ye have received; freely give!"

FOURTH

The extent to which God has blessed them. Take for example the missions of the American Baptist Missionary Union. There have been in eighty-nine years about 300,000 converts in the missions established or aided by the Union. These have been gathered from twenty different countries. There are living today more than 222,000 church members under the care of the missionaries of the Union. Over 113,000 of these are in heathen Asia and Africa. Think of the rescue of all these souls from the darkness of ignorance

and superstition, the curse of sin and the power of evil! They give as good evidence of real conversion and true allegiance to our Lord as converts in England or America. Remember also that this statement means not merely so many individuals brought to confess openly their faith in Christ and trained in the Christian life, but all the multiform and uplifting agencies which go with such a work, namely, churches, schools, theological seminaries, hospitals, printing presses, happy homes and enlightened customs. Nor are the Baptists alone in such successes. The missions of several other denominations have been crowned with similar blessings. As to the results of foreign missions in general, Sir Bartle Frere, lately English Governor at Bombay, says: "I assure you, that whatever may be told to the contrary, the teaching of Christianity among one hundred and sixty millions of Hindus and Mohammedans in India is effecting changes, moral, civil, and political, which for extent and rapidity are far more extraordinary than you and your fathers have witnessed in modern Europe." This is only a specimen of the testimonies that can be produced, not from prejudiced heathen or hasty worldly tourists but from men in high official position. God has put upon missions the seal of his peculiar blessing.

FIFTH

Their reflex influence. How rich has this been! We might in advance expect this to be the case. A fire hot enough to warm the distant corners of a large apartment must surely diffuse a genial glow in the circle close around it. Who are doing the most work at home for Christ? Are they not always those who are most deeply inter-

ested in the spread of the gospel abroad? It is an historical fact that our denomination received a wonderful impulse in all its life from the beginning of the foreign missionary enterprise by Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice. Then our churches began to draw together in closer unity. Then were started many of our schools and colleges. Then spiritual growth and numerical increase became at once observable. It is by reaching forth its branches that a tree's centre of life grows stronger. It has been well said that religion is a commodity of such peculiar sort that the more of it we export the more of it we have at home. Oh, when will all Christ's people awake to realize that this is the case! What vast blessings by the working of this spiritual law the Lord must have in reserve to bestow upon his churches when they fully respond to the call of his Great Commission!

And so we have at least these five great reasons: Christ's own positive command, the out-reaching spirit of the gospel, our own obligations to missions, the greatness of God's blessing upon them, and their beneficent reflex influence on our work at home. Put these five reasons, my friend, on the fingers of your right hand; then shut your hand and hold them fast! Do not let them get away from you! They are sound and strong and binding upon us all.

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